



## LIGHTENING SAFETY

Florida is considered the lightning capital of the nation due to the frequent afternoon thunderstorm. Our warm weather and position between the Gulf and Atlantic Ocean play key roles in developing thunderstorms, especially in the “lightning belt” of central Florida.

An average of ten deaths and forty injuries from lightning occur in Florida each year. Know how to keep safe in storms in order to avoid being struck by lightning and receiving serious burns and injuries, or worse.

### Watch for Developing Thunderstorms

Tall cumulus, dark clouds may be one of the first indications of a developing thunderstorm. Be aware of thunderstorm watches and warnings issued for your area.

Lightning can strike as far as ten miles away, about the distance you can hear thunder. When a storm is ten miles away, it may be difficult to tell a storm is coming. Even if there is a clear blue sky, you can still be at risk for lightning strikes.

If you hear thunder, you are within striking distance of lightning and should seek safe shelter.

### Seek Safe Shelter

Anyone engaged in outdoor work or activities needs to stop as soon as he or she hears the first rumble of thunder and move to a safe location. Do not come back outside and resume activities until thirty minutes after hearing the last roll of thunder.

Remember your animal companions; bring them inside too or put them in a safe structure.

**Safe:** Fully enclosed building with a roof, walls, and floor; fully enclosed, metal-top vehicle.

**Unsafe:** picnic shelters, pavilions, tents (any kind), dugouts, greenhouses, carports or open garages; convertibles, bicycles, motorcycles, golf carts, boats without cabins.

### Be Safe Inside

While you are inside, stay away from windows and doors and avoid contact with anything that conducts electricity. This includes corded telephones and computers. Do not take showers, do laundry, wash dishes, or use any appliance hooked up to your plumbing system.

### Reduce Outdoor Risks

There is no safe place outside during a storm. If you cannot get to a structure, try these suggestions to *minimize* your risk:

- Squat low to the ground. Kneel or crouch with your hands on your knees (“lightning position”).

- Avoid tall structures (towers, trees, fences, poles).
- Get away from bodies of water. Leave pools, rivers, lakes, and beaches. Come ashore and land any boats, kayaks, canoes, or other watercraft.
- Move into valleys, ravines, or low areas.
- Avoid water and wet items, metal objects, tents, natural lightning rods (golf clubs, tractors, fishing rods, bicycles).
- In the woods, stay under a low clump of trees. Never stand under a tall single tree in an open area.

If you feel your hair stand on end, drop to your knees, bend forward, and put your hands on your knees. Do not lie flat on the ground.

#### **A note for boats:**

If thunderstorms are forecast, do not go out. Get back to land and safe shelter as soon as skies are threatening or you hear thunder.

If you are caught in a storm, stay away from all metal and electrical parts—including your radio (unless it is an emergency). Go into the boat's cabin or, in a boat with no cabin, drop anchor and get as low as possible.

### **Helping a Lightning Strike Victim**

Medical care may be needed immediately to save the life of a lightning strike victim. Cardiac arrest and irregularities, burns, and nerve damage are common results of being struck by lightning.

Call 911 and perform CPR if the person's heartbeat and breathing have stopped. People who have been struck by lightning do not carry a charge; they are safe to touch.

### **Use Common Sense**

Many Florida residents are out and about in the summer: at the beach, fishing, cooking out, and playing sports. It is important to remember that lightning is dangerous and life-threatening. Stopping outdoor activities and going indoors at the first sign of storms can greatly reduce your risk of being struck by lightning.

When you first hear thunder, go to a safe location and stay there until thirty minutes after the last thunderclap. As the National Weather Service says, "If thunder roars, go indoors."